

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

**Wildlife
Services**

FY 2004

WILDLIFE SERVICES—GEORGIA

Contact Information:

Doug Hall, Georgia Wildlife Services State Director
USDA, WS School of Forest Resources, UGA
Athens, GA 30602

Phone: (706) 546-5637 FAX: (706) 316-9248

Toll-Free Number: 1-866-4USDAWS

E-mail: douglas.i.hall@aphis.usda.gov

Web site: www.aphis.usda.gov/ws

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Georgia

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on Georgia Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. WS' professional wildlife biologists respond to these requests with effective, selective and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS biologists work to protect property, agriculture and landscapes from damage caused by excessive numbers of white-tailed deer and resident Canada geese. They strive to minimize wildlife/aircraft conflicts by providing expertise to multiple civilian airports and military installations. WS helps reduce damage to Georgia's large timber industry, transportation, natural resources and property due to conflicts from beaver and associated flooding. The Program also protects people, pets and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases such as rabies; guards many natural resources such as fisheries and threatened and endangered species, from wildlife depredation; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. Specific projects conducted by Georgia WS include a Wildlife Management and Gamebird Restoration Project; conducting sampling and monitoring projects for rabies and West Nile virus; and managing wildlife conflicts in Georgia State Parks.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Safely and efficiently managing overabundant deer herds in sensitive conditions and donating tons of venison to area food banks
- Protecting timber, roadways, natural resources and property from beaver damage and flooding
- Protecting human safety, aircraft and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Humanely relocating Canada goose flocks and controlling overabundant feral pigeon populations to reduce associated property and health problems
- Providing a Wildlife Damage Management course at the University of Georgia

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Georgia

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation and problems associated with agriculture, property, and human health and safety
- Researching methods to increase ground nesting productivity of quail and other species through predation management
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife diseases and parasites such as rabies, West Nile virus, histoplasmosis, and E. coli
- Improving assessment, sampling and economic methods for wildlife damage management
- Protecting forest and wildlife resources as well as evaluating aquaculture problems in the southeastern United States



Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Resources—With Georgia's abundant wildlife populations, agriculture and wildlife conflicts commonly arise that require professional assistance. WS provides help in reducing browsing damage to tree seedlings by white-tailed deer, as well as combating flooded timber stands due to beaver activity. Crop damage from deer, blackbirds and Canada geese also occurs in grain crops, vineyards and hayfields. Surprisingly, vultures not only feed on carrion, but will attack newborn calves, horses, goats and pigs; requiring assistance in dispersing unwanted flocks of these large scavengers. Aquaculture, a growing industry in Georgia, experiences bird depredation problems and cooperators are provided with efficient ways to help reduce losses. WS has assisted Federal and state Agriculture Experiment Stations in Georgia in protecting valuable research plots from offending species such as deer, blackbirds and Canada geese.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—WS continues to provide expertise in the management of multiple military and commercial airport facilities to reduce conflicts between wildlife and aircraft. Additionally, research is underway in conjunction with the Georgia DOT to determine the potential impacts of locating a landfill too close to a commercial airport and assistance has also been provided to an Air National Guard bombing range with concern over lasers, used to guide bombs and missiles, reflecting off of beaver-impounded water and negatively affecting aircraft operations.

Wildlife Disease Management Activities—Georgia continues to partner with adjacent states in an aggressive Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) program

to prevent the migration of the raccoon strain of rabies into the central and western United States with the goal of eventually eliminating this form of rabies from Georgia all together. There is always the challenge of helping people combat histoplasmosis, E. coli and/or rabies associated with accumulations of droppings from blackbirds, pigeons or bat roosts and excessive numbers of Canada geese and feral ducks at public facilities like parks and playgrounds.

Collaborative work has been done with state and federal agencies for the detection of Classical Swine Fever, Foot and Mouth Disease virus and dove trichomoniasis. Concern over elevated West Nile Virus presence in the Atlanta area has prompted pigeon control at a large railway facility to help reduce the potential for further human contact. Occasionally WS is involved with exotic diseases. In FY2004 we were called upon to eradicate a population of black-tailed prairie dogs that had escaped captivity in West Central Georgia, causing heightened concern due to issues involving Monkey Pox virus.

Protecting Health and Safety in the Workplace—WS works at military bases, steel manufacturing facilities, power plants, paper mills, railroad facilities, hospitals, and public and private buildings to control unwanted birds from defacing property and creating unsanitary conditions for employees in the workplace. This includes pigeons, blackbirds, starlings, sparrows, crows, vultures, Canada geese and gulls. An integrated management approach is utilized to effectively solve most problems in a timely manner.

Protecting Gamebirds—Efforts continue to determine how to restore bobwhite quail populations that have steadily declined in the southern United States. WS plays a major role in an ongoing field research endeavor to determine if predator management during the nesting season can enhance bird productivity and populations on Georgia lands. The study involves WS working in the Albany and Thomasville areas with private landowners, the State wildlife agency, major universities and private research facilities to allow landowners and conservationists to strategically increase wildlife diversity on their lands. Using a wide variety of safe, effective wildlife management tools, biologists are managing major nest predators ranging from armadillos to raccoons and coyotes. Results are very promising and will have applications not only in Georgia, but over the entire range of the bobwhite.

Protecting Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites—WS has partnered with the State Parks Division in an agreement to provide expertise in the management of wildlife conflicts that may arise on any of the 63 Parks and Historic Sites around the state. Recently, the decision has been made to actively manage severely overpopulated deer herds at several sites and WS will continue to effectively and safely manage the herds as well as reduce severe overbrowsing of native flora. Other species of concern include wild hogs, ducks, geese, feral cats and raccoons.

Protecting Property—An estimated 600 requests for assistance are received by the public on a yearly basis to help identify and alleviate wildlife conflicts on public and private property. Conflicts with wildlife seem to always

Major Cooperators

- Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- Georgia Department of Agriculture
- Georgia Department of Health
- Moody, Warner Robins, and Dobbins Air Force Bases, US Army COE
- Georgia Cooperative Extension Service and Agricultural Experiment Stations
- University of Georgia, Auburn University, Tall Timbers Research Station
- Georgia Department of Transportation
- Cobb County Water Department
- State Botanical Gardens and State Arboretum
- Private Companies (timber, transportation, chemical, aerospace, manufacturing, etc.)
- National Park Service

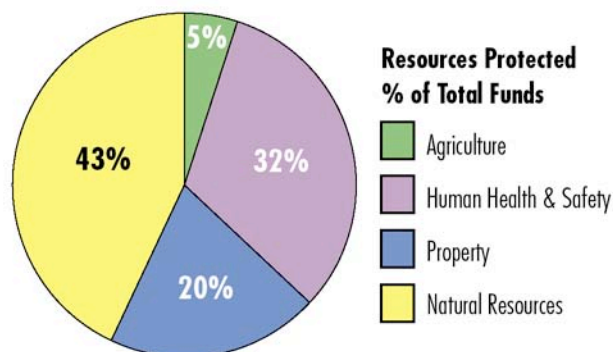
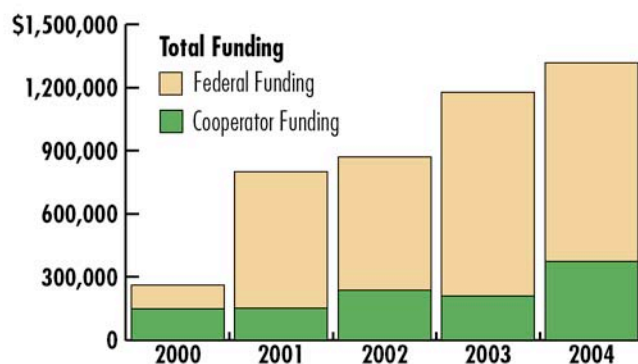
occur in diverse situations. Typical resources include parks, public beaches, water treatment facilities, golf courses, residential subdivisions, airports, office complexes, schools, private residences, watershed lakes, waterfowl impoundments, power companies, automobiles, aircraft, watercraft, plant nurseries, landscaping, industrial sites, public and private buildings. Species involved include armadillos, bats, bears, beaver, deer, muskrat, skunks, raccoons, opossums, otters, coyotes, fox, bobcat, squirrels, alligators, snakes, geese, ducks, cormorants, pigeons, herons, egrets, blackbirds, crows, starlings, sparrows, vultures. An integrated management approach is used to assist cooperators including habitat modification, exclusion, repellents, lethal control and the controlled use of explosives to remove beaver dams.

Looking to the Future

WS will continue to provide safe, professional and humane assistance to combat the diverse range of wildlife conflicts that exist in the state despite the fact that many wildlife management concerns are not responded to due to lack of funding and manpower. Increased habitat loss, human population growth, and the adaptability of many wildlife species to human environments will expand the need for professional resolution of wildlife conflicts, and diseases such as rabies, in the future. Significant species of concern include deer, geese, beaver, raccoon, vultures, pigeons and feral hogs. With the completion of the Gamebird Project, we look forward to expanding our ability to provide service to Georgia citizens.

Georgia Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in managing wildlife damage.



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.